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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the implications of Public Law 99-457, (the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986, which mandates that by 1990-91 all children that qualify for special education should have access to services from birth onward), with particular attention to the training needs of personnel serving handicapped children ages 0-5. Some issues associated with providing training for this personnel group include: (1) determining who is responsible for the training programs, which are not currently the domain of any one professional group; (2) revision of the curriculum to provide the extended amount of experience and course work necessary; (3) provision of quality training; (4) consideration of job mobility and the hiring problems of personnel trained under these programs; and (5) identification of needed competencies. The State Education Department of Arkansas has drafted suggestions of competencies needed by personnel working with preschool handicapped populations. The paper presents a set of competencies based on the Arkansas suggestions, guidelines of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and suggestions of the Council for Exceptional Children's Division of Early Childhood. Detailed competencies are outlined for the areas of multidisciplinary approach, assessment, programming, professional practice, issues and ethics, theories and history, and field experiences. (DB)

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P.L.99-457 AND TEACHER EDUCATION:

ARE WE READY?

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P.L. 99-457 and Teacher Education:
Are We Ready?

In the early 1970's, it all started. We were suddenly faced with the implementation of P.L. 94-142, the Education for Handicapped Children Act, one of the most powerful laws ever passed to help special education students. The task of implementation was difficult and time consuming. We are again facing a similar challenge: early intervention for infants and toddlers with handicaps (Federal Register, 1987).

We are facing a new age in delivery programs for children with special needs. The current legislation P.L. 99-457 requires that by 1990-91 all children that qualify for special education should have access to services from birth onward. The question arises: are we ready? This legislation constitutes a downward extension of P.L. 94-142; thus it includes all of the safeguard provisions accorded P.L. 94-142. We must be ready to identify and serve this very young population, while addressing due process and appropriate programming strategies.

Of vital importance to the implementation of P.L. 99-457 is the adequate training and credentialing of individuals to work with this young special education population. One cannot just add current special education courses and current early childhood courses and expect appropriate training for this new professional who must have the skills to meet the needs of zero-five year old special needs students.

Many of the current methods of training and credentialing individuals to work with handicapped children are inadequate for the zero-five year old population. Many states presently do not recognize this group as a part of the credentialing process. But with the implementation of P.L 99-457 and the stiff penalties of non-compliance, state departments of education are becoming concerned. There appears to be general agreement among professional groups and organizations, with interest in serving the needs of this population, that the training provided for individuals to work in this area needs study and revision. These programs should reflect the information known about young children with special needs and their families. These programs should also reflect ideal program practices and effective personnel preparation (Clary, 1985; Niebergall and Oas, 1985; Toole, et al, 1983).

The personnel addressed in this paper are those who will fill the roles of serving handicapped children ages zero-five. Because of P.L. 99-457, the preparation of these individuals has become a national issue. The now substantial and rapidly expanding knowledge base in this area indicates that young and special cannot simply be added together to obtain the competencies needed for the personnel to function successfully.

A child's development and conflicting disabling conditions interact and influence each other in a complex manner. Much of this interaction is imbedded and confounded within the context of the family. The unique knowledge needed by the personnel working in this field is defined by the nature of these interactions and the ways in which these interactions can influence a child's growth and development. We must avoid adding the 0-5 age group to the existing older groupings for the special educator or broadening the responsibilities for the early childhood educator.

Because the training practices and procedures for this personnel group are going to be unique, some interesting issues are posed. Some of the issues associated with providing training include: (1) determine who is responsible for the program which is not currently the domain of any one professional group, (2) revision of the curriculum to provide the extended amount of experiences and course work necessary for complete training, (3) provision of quality training, (4) consideration of job mobility and the hiring problems of personnel trained under these programs, and (5) identification of which competencies are needed.

For states that already have broad special categorization, certification standards determining a specific certification category for these zero-five population is essential. Many states certify teachers who need to have the skills necessary to work with children from kindergarten through high school on a non-categorical basis. This means that these teachers are assumed to possess the knowledge and skills required to provide an appropriate education for all the children across the mildly handicapped spectrum. Educating persons to teach high school special education and also educating those persons regarding differentiated knowledge and skills to serve elementary children is difficult. To extend this education to include the zero-five year old population is inappropriate. Conversely, most early childhood educators do not have the knowledge and skills to serve a handicapped population to the level necessary to meet the assessment and training needs of this extended population. Many of the existing training and certification requirements do not reflect the competencies necessary to adequately fulfill the role and responsibilities of P.L. 99-457.

Additionally, a great concern exists for higher education institutions that are required to meet NCATE standards regarding what will constitute the preschool special education guidelines. At the present time, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has not made any recommendations to NCATE. The Early Childhood Division of CEC has drafted some recommendations. For the purposes of this paper, we have incorporated recommendations from the Division of Early Childhood, the Guidelines from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Arkansas' Draft of Preschool Special Education Competencies.

The State Education Department of Arkansas has drafted suggestions of competencies for personnel working with pre-school handicapped populations. The Department identified these suggestions with the assistance of experts in the areas of handicapped, early childhood education, and from study of Public Law 99-457. The Department incorporated information from certification and training papers from other states (Illinois, Virginia, and Wisconsin). The following incorporates some of their suggested competencies, the NAEYC Guidelines, and the C.E.C. Division of early Childhood's suggestions:

P.L. 99-457 COMPETENCIES

I. Multidisciplinary Approach

Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of professional disciplines and resources/organizations in the community that provided services for parental support and services to young pre-school age children with handicapping conditions.

1. Demonstrate knowledge regarding referral of a child to appropriate professionals.
    a. recognize qualifications and skills of variety of professionals
    b. possess ability to provide necessary reports on child's skills
    c. possess ability to integrate recommendations from other professionals into the child's daily program
2. Demonstrate knowledge of family dynamics
    a. assess impact of handicapped child on family structure
    b. identify emotional implications and experiences of family
    c. serve as liaison between agencies and families
    d. able to identify and refer to appropriate agencies
    e. maintain regular communication
    f. set functional and realistic goals
3. Knowledge of community and resources
    a. conduct awareness activities
    b. identify and access community resources
    c. recognize need for outside resources
    d. coordinate between school and other agencies

II. Assessment

Demonstrate knowledge of a variety of assessment approaches including observation, interviewing, information review and testing in a variety of environmental settings for a variety purposes.

1. Demonstrate knowledge of how to utilize assessment procedures for identification

a. possess knowledge of typical/atypical child development in all areas
b. have ability to select, use and interpretation of nondiscriminatory assessment instruments
c. serve as an interdisciplinary team member
d. use all available information in forming education plans
e. assess skills in multidisciplinary setting
f. conduct interviews

2. Demonstrate knowledge of communication skills with children, parents, volunteers, and other professionals
   a. present coherent reports
   b. maintain confidentiality but present information
   c. solicit input from others in multiple settings using a variety of systems
   d. confront person with relevant issues
   e. conduct interviews
   f. assess child's interaction

3. Demonstrate ability to measure child's progress
   a. integration of data
   b. monitoring progress

III. Programming

Demonstrate knowledge of organizing and identifying appropriate curriculum

1. Demonstrates knowledge of program models and process
   a. identify and discuss a variety of intervention models
   b. identify and discuss a variety of service delivery models
   c. specify characteristics of curriculum
   d. use eclectic models
   e. use other professional recommendations in daily curriculum
   f. discuss concept of least restrictive environment
   g. Use a variety of methods and materials designed for all areas of development

2. Demonstrate and use strategies to facilitate learning
   a. plan lessons
   b. assist paraprofessionals
   c. coordinate strategies in learning principles behavior management, positive reinforcement, techniques, skill sequence, Piaget's developmental tasks, task analysis, incidental learning, and generalization
   d. select appropriate activities for child
   e. create and model activities for individual
   f. implement a variety of appropriate methods including sensory stimulation, activity based instruction, and relationship focused intervention
   g. identify varying disabilities

3. Demonstrate skills necessary for writing and implementing individualized educational plans to Individual Service Plans
   a. construct long and short term goals
   b. write objectives (behavioral)
   c. utilize terminology that is understood by all
   d. use assessment data for instructional activity planning that is functional and age appropriate
   e. use all other professional recommendations for IEP's
   f. incorporate goals and objectives relative to transition into lease restrictive environment

4. Demonstrate skills necessary to utilize technology
   a. proficient in selecting appropriate media
   b. proficient in using appropriate media
   c. proficient in helping others to use media

5. Demonstrate skills necessary for behavior and management
   a. implement proper behavior management
   b. use time, space, materials, and others effectively in maximizing progress
   c. describe health and safety procedures

6. Demonstrate knowledge about communication and language development
   a. discuss normal language development 0-5
   b. discuss strategies for communication intervention

7. Demonstrate knowledge regarding physical and medical data
   a. discuss normal physical and motor development
   b. utilize appropriate positioning and feeding techniques
   c. discuss and identify basic disorders and illnesses
   d. describe maintenance of equipment and apparatus
   e. describe medical care of premature and low birth weight infants.
   f. interpret medical history reports

IV. Professional Practice

Demonstrate ability to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate administrative aspects of ECE program and provide training to individuals in the program.

1. Demonstrate awareness of federal, state, local laws, policies, and regulations
   a. demonstrate knowledge of federal, state, and local laws
   b. demonstrate due process
   c. incorporate due process time frames
   d. implement administrative procedures in complying with due process
   e. disseminate information

2. Effectively communicate knowledge and ideas

a. assess in multiple environmental settings
b. maintain rapport with guardian
c. select assessment according to reasons for referral and with considerations of ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic and handicapping characteristics
d. know terminology
e. possess interviewing skills
f. present ideas in well-planned manner
g. solicit feedback and input
h. listen and respond non-judgmentally to others

V. Issues and Ethics

Demonstrate awareness of issues and existing codes of Ethics

VI. Theories and History

Demonstrate knowledge of historical, philosophical, psychological, and social foundations of early childhood

VII. Field Experiences

Demonstrate adequate field experience

1. Student teaching experiences which include

a. major responsibility in classroom
b. use of exemplary settings
c. supervision on-site by both college and public school personnel
d. 150 clock hours in each of two settings, two age groups
e. seminar meetings which accompany student teaching to provide opportunity for analysis, evaluation, and discussion of field experiences
f. supervised experience in working with parents
g. experience in working with interdisciplinary teams of processionals

What can be suggested by the above is that a need exists for a unique standard for certification for those who will teach the zero-five special education population. This standard requires extensive cooperation between early Childhood and Special Education programs. An excellent opportunity for a true merger of Special Education and "regular" education now exists which will require a non-territorial approach and a mutual sharing of expertise and ideas. By using the NAEYC Guidelines, the CEC Division of Early Childhood draft, and the expertise from different states and universities, we will have a plan that will meet future NCATE standards.

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